Clevedon School Psychology Curriculum: Statement of Intent

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of becoming." Goethe

Purpose of study:

Our curriculum goal for all learners is to ensure that they have an understanding of the reasons why people think and behave in the way in which they do. To appreciate how many different factors can influence an individual and have both positive and negative effects. By appreciating this our students will become empathetic and caring members of society. This means that they can become positive models for change in the world.

Psychology is fundamental in empowering students to be aware of their own actions and the influence of group dynamics. A clear aim of the psychology curriculum is to foster a growth mindset. Psychology offers a unique opportunity for students to truly understand how their own mind and behaviour works. They can apply this understanding of metacognition to all aspects of their life and studies, both now and in the future.

The Clevedon way promotes character, ambition and community in our curriculum:

The Psychology curriculum aims to develop students' confidence in applying their knowledge and understanding to the world around them. They are encouraged to become critical thinkers, to challenge their own opinions of the world. They learn how to critically evaluate research and theories and to consider the social implications that psychological research has. This is particularly prevalent in the topics of Social Influence, Psychopathology and Gender. We consider the social sensitivity and ethics surrounding these topics. Our curriculum is ambitious as we cover a wide spectrum of theories and approaches and students are required to identify connections between them. They are required to be active participants in lessons rather than merely passive passengers.

The psychology curriculum aims to ensure that students encounter diverse cultures and societies and people through looking at a range of cross-cultural research. Students have to be aware of the issues surrounding cultural bias in research and the use of cultural relativism and emic approaches in research to overcome these issues. They are aware of the issue of ethnocentrism in psychological theories and research which is key to understanding the potentially negative effects of cultural bias.

As students learn that all behaviour is a consequence of both genetic and environmental factors they can understand the importance of showing individuals the Clevedon School Value of kindness. Knowing why people may experience mental health conditions will mean that they can begin to breakdown the stigma surrounding this. They learn about the importance of having a supportive family and community in the recovery of mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia. This knowledge will ensure that they treat others with kindness – appreciating the positive impact that being kind can have on those around them.

Our curriculum is ambitious for all learners:

We realise it is crucial to root learning in real life, in order to help students to see the links between school and the world beyond our walls, as well as to prepare them for life after Year 13. In our subject, we constantly apply theories and research to real life. One of the assessment objectives is application where we apply the learned knowledge to novel scenarios. These often have a real-world focus. We discuss psychology in the news and apply theories to what is happening in the world. For example looking at minority influence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We encourage students to consider career opportunities in psychology from day 1. As part of the summer transition work they have to research a career from the BPS website. We have guest speakers who work in the field of psychology. We have had a clinical psychologist, a neuroscientist and a music psychology lecturer visit the school. This helps students to consider aspirational pathways in psychology. Students have also been participants for a Bristol University research project looking at the role of anxiety on cognitive ability.

For students who are disadvantaged or SEND we ensure that all teachers are aware of their needs. Disadvantaged students are provided with all the necessary resources and trips or lectures are funded by the school. We ensure a greater proportion of quality questioning for the disadvantaged pupils. High expectations are the basis of our teaching and these are maintained for all students.

We ensure that students who come to us with high prior attainment and high aspirations are stretched and challenged to achieve their goals by moving beyond the specification. Students can conduct their own psychological research during the summer of Year 12. They are signposted to a range of additional reading including journal articles. This helps to prepare them for their next steps at university.

Our curriculum is sequenced to enable our students to progress to brilliance:

The curriculum is a progression model which allows students to develop both a detailed understanding of psychological concepts alongside the necessary skills to achieve well in Year 13. The course begins with the Memory topic which teaches students about how their own memory works and what methods they can use to improve their own memories (metacognition). They learn about the value of semantic processing and elaborative rehearsal in the development of long-term memories. This is then applicable to all of their KS5 subjects. We have ensured a good cross curriculum link by teaching the Attachment topic in Term 1 which means that those students who study Health and Social Care have this knowledge for their Unit 1 exam in January. Research methods is taught implicitly from day 1 through the other topics to prepare them for this vital section which is worth one third of their overall grade.

In Year 13 we begin with the Issues and Debates topics which requires the students to think synoptically. This encourages students to reflect on previous learning and to apply it to the current topic. Students can then make use of issues and debates to generate sophisticated evaluation points for their Paper 3 topics and extended writing pieces.

We incorporate retrieval practice in every lesson in the form of HFLS quizzing and quick start activities. This ensures that students are laying down long term memories of the key concepts. In Year 13 students are assessed weekly in the form of throwback tests on Year 1 content, timed essays or topic tests. This encourages students to revisit material throughout the course leading to stronger memory traces. We utilise our own psychological knowledge to plan lessons which encourage the deepest level of semantic processing so that students are developing schemas and long-term memories.